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ABSTRACT

The identification of critical writing skills was the first step in a project designed to specify language skills that should be included in instruments for assessing students' entry into and exit from bilingual classrooms. Writing skills were screened according to three criteria: appearance on state or local competency lists, textbook emphasis, and the nature of a skill as either a prerequisite of skills at a higher grade level or a subskill of another skill. The list was consequently reduced to approximately 180 different skills, which were assigned to appropriate grade levels that were derived from textbook data. The skills were then organized by categories (handwriting, spelling, mechanics, language, general discourse, and discourse products) into a framework of writing skills. Next, skill specifications were written to delineate each skill and to ensure its appropriate assessment. For most skills, three or more sample assessment items were written. Among the problems encountered in the development of the writing skill specifications were (1) the discrepancy between the simplicity of the skill statement and the complexity of the actual skill, (2) adequate directions, and (3) the development of written responses and multiple choice items. (The appendix consists of sample skill specifications.) (HOD)

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English Writing Requirements for Bilingual
Students in Grades K-6*

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ENGLISH WRITING REQUIREMENTS FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS IN GRADES K-6

A goal of transitional bilingual programs is to provide students with sufficient proficiency in English to function in the monolingual classroom. Bilingual students need to be prepared not only to speak and listen in English, but to read and write as well. This paper discusses the steps involved in completing a project to describe both the English writing skills required in grades 1-6 and the assessment of those skills. It also discusses some of the problems that were encountered in accomplishing the task.

This task was part of a project undertaken to specify language skills that should be included in assessment instruments that can assist in determining students' entry into and exit from the bilingual classroom. These skills were to be one section of a Language Skills Framework. The Language Skills Framework includes two other components--reading skills and oral language skills. The complete Framework will be available soon for distribution to all Title VII districts in the country.

SKILLS IDENTIFICATION

The first task of the project involved identifying the critical writing skills. We looked to the literature for help and encountered our first problems:

1. Although there currently is an intense interest in writing, the literature does not now provide adequate information on the specificity or range of critical writing skills. The lists of skills suggested by authorities are usually too brief and the skills themselves are too general, as these are, for example:

Uses accepted punctuation and capitalization.

Uses accepted form and appropriate language in varying types of written communication (Petty, Petty, Newman, and Skeen, in Squire, 1977, pp. 89-90).

Even more general is the frequently cited, "Writes effectively."

2. Sometimes a listed "skill" really consists of a skill plus a task or an item description. The following skill statement is typical:

Writes a description of a picture of a painting.

"Writes a description" is the skill; the rest of the statement describes the specific object to be described. However, the same writing skill is often relisted as a separate skill that is differentiated only by that object to be described-- for example, "Writes a description of a person."

3. Skill identification is also hampered by the literature's failure to designate the discourse-type subskills of a skill statement such as "Writes a description," that is, subskills like "Uses sensory terms," "Uses spatial ordering."
4. Finally, some skills proposed in the literature are more than too general; they are vague. This skill sampled from a state competency document (Georgia Department of Education, 1968) is typical:

Understands that writing is a tool of communication (p. 77).

The Collection of Skills

Despite these problems, many skills were identified during the review of scholarly recommendations and competency lists. Each broad skill, such as "Writes a description," was analyzed to identify its subskills. The collection of skills and subskills was then compared with skills derived from the SWRL data available on language-arts textbook series, and any duplicated skills were deleted. To collect the data, page-by-page task analysis is performed on textbooks used in the monolingual classroom to determine the content of the instruction and the manner in which the content is practiced (Humes, 1978). Computer processing of this data produces lists of content by grade level. Consequently, a large data base describes actual textbook (and therefore classroom) instruction in detail.

The Critical Skills

The comprehensive list was then screened for essential skills according to three criteria: appearance on state or local competency lists, textbook emphasis, and the nature of a skill as either a prerequisite of skills at a higher grade level or as a subskill of another skill. Skills that met these criteria were retained on the list with the exception of some that were covered by the reading component (such as dictionary skills). The list was consequently reduced to approximately 180 different skills.

GRADE LEVELS

The next step in the project involved assigning appropriate grade levels to the collected skills. Again the literature posed problems:

1. Some language arts authorities do not assign grade levels to skills because they feel that sequencing is the local school district's prerogative.
2. Some authorities designate cuts in sequencing in blocks such as K-3 rather than in grades.
3. Other sources list skills for more than one grade level without noting the criteria that differentiate performance among grade levels. These grade 3, 4, and 5 skills are such an example:

Grade 3: Writes short stories and/or poetry (p. 54).

Grade 4: Writes stories and poetry (p. 68).

Grade 5: Writes stories, plays, and poetry (p. 92).

(Los Angeles City Schools, 1964)

4. Still other sources sequence skills objectives without presenting any evidence to validate their ordering, and frequently their sequencing conflicts with textbook sequencing.

Table 1 displays the grade-level variation that occurs between authorities' designations and textbook presentation. The table is based on a study by Golub (1971), who analyzed differences between grade-level designations found in language arts books for teachers and the grade levels of instruction in students' textbooks. The chart shows the grade-level consensus found in four books written by eminent language arts scholars, the modal grade level at which four textbook series presented each skill, and the grade-level designations suggested by the SWRL textbook data. The SWRL grade level is the one at which most or usually all analyzed textbook series present (or have presented) the skill. This designation may or may not be the modal level; more frequently it is not.

Table 1

VARIATION OF GRADE-LEVEL DESIGNATION

	Grade Level for Assessment					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<u>Punctuation</u>						
Uses period to end a declarative sentence.	A	G,X				
Uses question mark to end an interrogative sentence.		A,G, X				
Uses exclamation point to end an exclamatory sentence.			G	X,A		
Uses period at the end of abbreviations.		G	A	X		
Uses comma after direct address.				G	X	A
Uses apostrophe in contractions.		G	A		X	
<u>Sentence Patterns</u>						
Uses NV pattern.	A		G,X			
Uses NVN pattern.		A		X	G	

Note:

A = Authorities' listing in Golub's (1971) survey^{*}

G = Golub's (1971) grade-level listing by modal appearance in 1-4 (1966) textbook series

X = Listing from SWRL data by grade level at which most or all textbooks present or have presented the skill

^{*}Golub, L. S., and others. Present and proposed needs, objectives, and components of a language learning program. ERIC Reproduction Service Number ED 058 223, 1971.

Considerable grade-level variation is also found across state and local competency lists, as is evident in Table II. This table illustrates the variation across seven states. Information on these skills was compiled from representative state documents (Lawlor, 1979), which frequently place skills at levels higher than those at which the skills appear in textbook instruction.

Because the grade levels reported in the literature and by the competency lists are inconsistent and often do not parallel the actual level of textbook instruction, the grade levels of writing skills for the Language Skills Framework derive from the SWRL textbook data. These data were also used because the most reliable data available on the classroom activities across the entire country are the textbooks students use. And when students must function in the English classroom, the actual activities occurring there are the important criteria of success in that classroom. However, when an individual school district is developing its own list of critical skills, the grade levels of the skills, as well as the critical skills themselves, should be determined on the basis of the textbooks and curriculum of that particular district.

THE SKILLS FRAMEWORK

After the grade levels were specified, the skills were organized by categories into a framework of writing skills. Figure 1 displays a diagram of the major categories of skills--Handwriting, Spelling, Mechanics, Language, General Discourse, and Discourse Products. A Discourse Product is defined here as a whole composition, such as a story, an essay, a poem. Composing effective written products requires the use of many individual skills, or subskills, and these are covered in the General Discourse area.

Table II

SAMPLE OF CRITICAL SKILLS AND GRADE
LEVELS OF SKILLS ACROSS STATES*

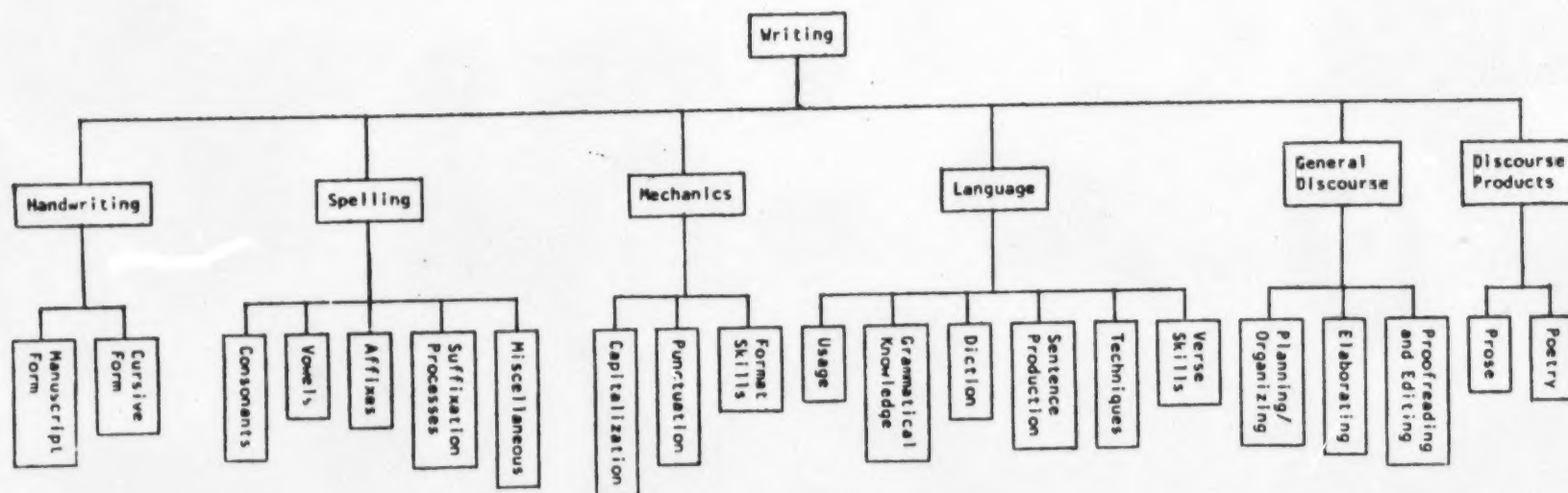
SKILLS AT THE WORD/PHRASE LEVEL	GRADE LEVEL FOR ASSESSMENT					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
SPELLING						
Suffixes						
1. Spells plurals of nouns by adding <u>-s</u> .		F,G	L,O			
2. Spells plurals of nouns by adding <u>-es</u> .		F,G	O		L	
3. Spells verbs with <u>-ing</u> .	G		TX,O	L		
4. Spells past tense forms of verbs with <u>-ed</u> suffix.	G		O			L
5. Spells new words by adding derivational suffixes.					G	TN,G
Suffixation Processes						
1. Changes <u>y</u> to <u>i</u> when adding suffixes.			G			
2. Drops final <u>e</u> when adding suffixes.				O		,TX
3. Doubles the final consonant when adding suffixes.				O	G	TX

NOTE: F = Florida
O = Oklahoma
G = Georgia
TN = Tennessee

L = Louisiana
TX = Texas
M = Michigan

* Lawlor, J. State competencies for Writing: Grades K-6 (Technical Note No. 3-79-07). Los Alamitos, California: SWRL Educational Research and Development, 1979.

Figure 1. DIAGRAM OF LANGUAGE SKILLS FRAMEWORK FOR WRITING



The framework presents one way to organize writing skills. Other frameworks are possible; however, this one was satisfactory for our purposes. The parenthesized letters in the diagram are code designations by which individual skills are identified. The category letters and the individual skill numbers are combined to give each skill a code.

SKILL SPECIFICATIONS

After the skills were organized into a framework, skill specifications were written to delineate each skill and to ensure its appropriate assessment. The skill specifications are based on content and task analysis and on textbook instruction. The relevant literature was also referenced in preparing the skill specifications. The Appendix includes samples of the skills specifications.

Skill Statement

The skill statement appears at the top of the page after its code number. In general, the skill statements are cast in terms used both by many language arts authorities and by competency lists. These skill statements generally must be more precisely defined by further explication before assessments can be devised.

Skill Descriptions

This explication is accomplished by the Skill Description. It notes factors involved in the use of each skill, including other inherent skills and prerequisite knowledge.

Assessments

The Skill Description is followed by the section on assessment. For most skills, three or more sample assessment items were written. However, for the writing samples that assess Discourse Products, only one item was written for each skill because these items are complex and because only one writing sample per skill should be included on an actual assessment instrument. Included in writing sample specifications are the prompt, the scoring key, and scoring guidelines. The scoring guidelines in the Appendix are samples of one content characteristic and one form skill.

The items that were written are the most appropriate type for the skill to be assessed. Items that require a written response were frequently provided because they are often the most appropriate assessment type. They were the only type included for Discourse Products because a student's ability to compose a complete written product can only be assessed through an actual composing task. When written-response items were suggested for skills other than Discourse Products, multiple-choice items were also included so they can be used as substitutes when administering written-response items is not feasible. When multiple-choice items were either as appropriate as or more appropriate than written-response items, only multiple-choice items were prepared.

Item Descriptions

Following the sample assessment items is an item description that provides guidelines for preparing additional assessment items that are precise and appropriate.

PROBLEMS

We encountered many problems in writing skill specifications that others may encounter if they wish to develop their own skill specifications based on their own local curriculum. These problems are in addition to the usual ones of avoiding sexism, ethnic stereotypes, and violence.

One problem that confronted us was the discrepancy between the simplicity of the skill statement and the complexity of the actual skill. The skill statement frequently named what seemed to be a straightforward skill. However, writing the skill description required close analysis of all factors inherent in the skill and relevant to its assessment, and this close analysis often revealed that the skill was far more complex than its skill statement suggested. Some skills were exposed as so complex that they should not be assessed. For example, many competency lists include for assessment a handwriting skill, "Writes sentences from dictation." However, content and task analysis revealed that this is no simple handwriting skill. Writing sentences from dictation involves many other skills, such as those of spelling, mechanics, and listening.

We found that some skills can only be assessed in terms of another skill. Distinguishing between proper and common nouns is one such skill. It is assessed by capitalization skills. Identifying most sentence types is covered by assessment of punctuation skills.

Sometimes a skill's complexity wasn't fully realized until assessment items and their descriptions were written. Then the skill description (and often even the items themselves) had to be completely rewritten.

Directions also posed a problem because a single inappropriate or omitted word may mislead students. Specific directions must be painstakingly written so students unquestionably understand what they are to do. Yet the directions must be devoid of technical words, when this restriction is possible.

Care must also be taken that each item assesses only one skill. For example, items assessing ability to construct coordinate subject-noun phrases must not include assessment of the skill of subject-verb agreement; items assessing capitalization of proper names must not include capitalization of the first word of a sentence.

Written-response items and multiple-choice items pose different problems. Written-response items often appear to be simple to devise, but this simplicity is deceptive. Such items must be carefully developed or they will not elicit the desired response. If, for example, the skill being assessed is the transformation of a declarative sentence into a question, the item must be devised so that the student does not simply rewrite the sentence in the same word order and add a question mark. Also, any component skill, or subskill, that should be assessed by the item must be explicitly prompted. If, for example, precise language is to be used in composing a written product, the item stimulus must tell students to use "exact words."

Written-response items are also difficult to score, so guidelines for rating responses must be included in the skill specifications. If such rating criteria cannot be devised, this inability suggests that there is a deeper problem with either the skill description or the assessment item.

On the other hand, multiple-choice items are easy to score, but they are usually even more exacting to devise than are the written-response items. Multiple-choice assessment items are particularly difficult to devise for writing because they should require a response that assesses writing ability rather than reading ability. For example, the skill "Limits a paragraph to one main idea" is frequently assessed in tests by an item which requires students to read a paragraph and select the answer that best represents the main idea of that paragraph. This item type does not assess a writing skill; it assesses reading--reading for the main idea.

The reading requirement of some multiple-choice items must also be considered. The amount of reading students must do to select a correct answer should be as limited as possible; however, this reading requirement sometimes cannot be lowered and still have the item assess the skill. Also the reading vocabulary used in the items must be limited to those words that are on controlled vocabulary lists for each grade level. Writing a good primary-level item with only those words available on primary reading lists is challenging.

The construction of distractor choices for multiple-choice items also poses development problems. Distractors used in the sample items and described in the item descriptions should be designed and written so that they serve diagnostic purposes, and this diagnostic information

should be discussed in the item descriptions. Furthermore, distractor choices must be carefully screened so that they are appropriate for the grade level of the skill being assessed; for example, although the letter f is an appropriate distractor in items for spelling ph when it is assessed at grade 5, ph is not an appropriate distractor for f when it is assessed at grade 1.

Developing a language skills framework is a time consuming task. As should be evident by now, writing skill specifications is even more time-consuming. Yet such specifications must be written to determine what is to be done and to validate what has been done. The all-too-frequent approach consists of reading the skill statement and then whipping off a few items with a correct answer and several distractors without regard to isolating a single skill for assessment, to considering the mode being assessed, to guaranteeing the precision of the directions, or to serving diagnostic purposes with the use of appropriate distractors.

Writing skill specifications for this project required the full-time, eight-hour daily effort of four well trained professional staff members for approximately two months. However, this kind of effort is essential when the results of a project may be used in determining students' entry into and exit from the bilingual classroom.

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Skill: W4 Mp 7110

Skill Statement

Uses apostrophe in singular possessive forms.

Skill Description

The student uses apostrophes correctly in singular possessive forms. The student must identify the correct position of the apostrophe in the singular possessive (i.e., between the root word and the s; e.g., boy's). Singular possessives may be formed from singular proper or common nouns (e.g., John's/dog's) or from indefinite pronouns (e.g., someone's). However, indefinite pronouns are not included in assessment here because they are not as commonly used as nouns in textbook instruction at this grade level. Additionally, inanimate nouns are not assessed for possessives since they are less frequent and are not accepted by some authorities (e.g., not the cup's handle but the handle of the cup).

Implicit in this skill is the ability to distinguish between plural forms of nouns and singular possessives. However, students should not be expected to distinguish between singular and plural possessives at this grade level.

Knowledge of the technical terms apostrophe and singular possessive is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Which word is right?

1. _____ uncle is a sea captain.
 - A. Dick's
 - B. Dicks
 - C. Dic'ks
2. Betsy has a pet bird. She wants to clean the _____ cage.
 - A. bird's
 - B. birds
 - C. bir'ds
3. All the _____ went down the stairs.
 - A. boy's
 - B. boys
 - C. bo'ys

Directions: Fill in the blank with the correct form of the underlined word. The form shows ownership.

4. Tony has a bicycle.
_____ bicycle is red.
5. The bird has a nest.
The _____ nest is in a tree.
6. My sister has a kitten.
My _____ kitten drinks milk.

Item Description

The stimulus for the selected-response item type (items 1-3) is a sentence with a blank replacing a missing word. In items 1 and 2, the student selects the singular possessive form (choice A's) to fill in the blank. Distractors are forms with no apostrophe (choice B's) and forms in which the apostrophe precedes, by one letter, its correct position in the word (choice C's).

Item 3 is a distractor item for which the plural noun (choice B) is the correct response. Distractor items should be included in the assessment to give the student the opportunity to make discriminating responses.

The stimulus for the constructed-response item type (items 4-6) is a sentence with an underlined word. This word is to be used in forming the singular possessive. The student fills in the blank in the second sentence with the correct form.

Singular possessives selected for assessment can be proper or common nouns. However, proper nouns ending in s (e.g., James/Charles) should be avoided because there are two acceptable possessive forms (e.g., James's or James').

Providing sufficient sentence context is important in these items, particularly when common nouns are used. For example, in item 2, the sentence "Betsy has a pet bird" is included so that the student knows that the possessive form is singular. The sentence "She wants to clean the _____ cage" does not provide enough information to facilitate a correct choice since either bird's or birds' could be correct.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR A LANGUAGE USAGE SKILL

Skill: W4 Lu 5120

Skill Statement

Relates sentences by transformation: declarative ↔ interrogative: do support.

Skill Description

The student transforms declarative sentences that do not contain an auxiliary verb into interrogative sentences by inserting forms of the verb do (e.g., The dog barked → Did the dog bark?), and transforms interrogative sentences containing forms of do into declarative sentences (e.g., Did the dog bark? → The dog barked).

Two steps are required to transform declarative sentences into interrogative sentences using the do support. First the verb do is inserted into the declarative sentence where it assumes the tense (and person/number) of the main verb (e.g., The dog barked → The dog did bark). Second, the inflected form of do is moved to the initial position (e.g., The dog did bark → Did the dog bark?). The rule for this transformation can be stated as follows:

subject + main verb (with tense marker) →
subject + do (with tense marker) + main verb →
do (with tense marker) + subject + main verb.

The transformation from interrogative to declarative reverses the process outlined above. First the verb do is shifted from the initial position to a position between the subject and main verb (e.g., Did the dog bark? → The dog did bark). Next, the tense marker is shifted from do to the main verb, and do is deleted from the sentence (e.g., The dog did bark → The dog barked). The rule for this transformation can be stated as follows:

do (with tense marker) + subject + main verb →
subject + do (with tense marker) + main verb →
subject + main verb (with tense marker).

Comment: The terminal punctuation also undergoes a change in these two transformations. However, terminal punctuation is covered by separate skills in the framework and is not assessed here (see Skills W2 Mp 1100 and 2000).

Knowledge of the terms declarative, interrogative, and transformation is not prerequisite to this skill, but knowledge of the terms telling sentence and question is required.

W4 Lu 5120 (continued)

Assessment

Sample Items

Directions: Each telling sentence can be made into a question. Which question is right?

1. She likes to read stories.
A. Does she like to read stories?
B. Likes she to read stories?
C. Do she likes to read stories?
D. Does she likes to read stories?
2. Our team won every game.
A. Did our team win every game?
B. Won our team every game?
C. Do our team won every game?
D. Did our team won every game?

Directions: Each question can be made into a telling sentence. Which telling sentence is right?

3. Did Tommy bring a present?
A. Tommy brought a present.
B. Tommy do bring a present.
C. Tommy do brought a present.
D. Tommy did brought a present.
4. Does Alice play football?
A. Alice plays football.
B. Alice do play football.
C. Alice do plays football.
D. Alice does plays football.

Directions: Change this telling sentence into a question. Write the question.

5. She likes to read stories.
_____?

Directions: Change this question into a telling sentence.

6. Did Tommy bring a present?
_____.

Item Description

The correct responses to items 1 and 2 (choice A's) are the interrogative transformations of the declarative sentences. The distractors follow three patterns:

1. Choice B's follow this pattern: verb (with tense marker) + subject. Students who choose this distractor may not even realize that this transformation requires the use of the verb do. They may view all interrogative transformations as simple inversions of word order (see Skill W3 Lu 5110).
2. Choice C's follow this pattern: do + subject + main verb (with tense marker). Students who choose this distractor may realize that do is inserted in the sentences and that it is shifted to the initial position, but they do not transfer the tense marker from the main verb to do. The plural present tense should not be used in the stimulus, or this distractor type will be a legitimate interrogative sentence (e.g., They win every game → Do they win every game?).
3. Choice D's follow this pattern: do (with tense marker) + subject + main verb (with tense marker). Students who choose this distractor may recognize that do must be inserted in the sentence and that it must assume the tense of the main verb, but they incorrectly inflect both do and the main verb.

Items 3 and 4 are designed to assess the student's ability to perform the reciprocal transformation, from Interrogative to declarative. The correct responses (choice A's) are the declarative transformations of the interrogative sentences. Distractors follow three patterns:

1. Choice B's follow this pattern: subject + do + main verb. Students who select this distractor may recognize that do must be shifted to an internal position between the subject and main verb, but they incorrectly delete the tense marker from do. The plural present tense should not be used in the stimulus, or this distractor type will be a legitimate declarative sentence (e.g., Do they play football? → They do play football).
2. Choice C's follow this pattern: subject + do + main verb (with tense marker). Students who select this distractor have improperly shifted the tense marker from do to the main verb without deleting do from the sentence.

3. Choice D's follow this pattern: subject + do (with tense marker) + main verb (with tense marker). Students who select this distractor may recognize that the tense marker is shifted to the main verb, but they incorrectly retain the inflected form of do in the sentence.

Two distractor types are not recommended for items 3 and 4. First is the pattern subject + do (with tense marker) + main verb (e.g., Alice does play football). This is a legitimate declarative sentence even though it is technically not the correct transformation of the interrogative sentence. (The do in "Alice does play football" is generally viewed as emphatic, whereas the do in "Does Alice play football?" is simply a "dummy" verb whose sole function is to carry the tense marker.)

The second distractor type that should be avoided is the pattern subject + main verb (e.g., Alice play football). This distractor places an inappropriate emphasis on the skill of subject-verb agreement, which is assessed elsewhere in the framework (see Skill W4 Lu 4100).

Items 5 and 6 are adaptations of the selected-response items in a constructed-response format. Transformation skills are more appropriately assessed by constructed-response items, but such items pose some problems with scoring. For example, the student could respond to item 5 by simply changing the terminal punctuation of the declarative sentence (e.g., She likes to read stories?). In item 6 the student could retain the verb did in the declarative sentence and still have a legitimate sentence (e.g., Tommy did bring a present). These problems could be minimized by expanding the item directions to specifically require the do transformation, but the directions would then be so complex as to be confusing. Therefore, considerable latitude must be allowed when scoring these items.

It should also be noted that the use of constructed-response items increases the item difficulty. Students will probably find it much more difficult to generate their own transformations than to select the correct transformations, as in items 1 through 4. Although constructed-response items may be more appropriate for assessing this skill, the scoring problems and the increased difficulty of these items should be considered when choosing the item format.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR A GENERAL DISCOURSE SKILL

W4 GDe (continued)

Skill: W4 GDe 1120

Skill Statement

Elaborates paragraphs: Limits a paragraph to one main idea.

Skill Description

The student includes only one main idea in a paragraph; he/she is able to identify information that cannot be added to a paragraph because it does not relate to the main idea. This information may consist of irrelevant supporting statements or irrelevant supporting evidence for a supporting point; however, knowledge of this terminology is not prerequisite to this skill.

Assessment

Comments: This skill is best assessed by a writing sample. If this assessment is not feasible, the selected-response item may be used. Care must be taken that the item type used does not assess a reading rather than a writing skill as does one item type frequently included in assessment instruments for writing. This item type requires students to read a paragraph and then select a sentence that gives the main idea of the paragraph, thus assessing a receptive-language rather than a productive-language skill.

Sample Items

Directions: One sentence can be added to the paragraph because it fits the idea of the paragraph. Which sentence is it?

1. Football players must be strong to play in a game. They must be able to knock other players down. Players must be able to run fast because fast runners can carry the ball to make points in the game.

A. Football players have to throw the ball hard.
B. Football players wear shirts with numbers on them.
C. Some football players go to school to learn to play ball.
D. Basketball players run fast.

2. You must take good care of a pet bird. You must give it water to drink. Its cage must be kept clean so the bird will stay well. You can put paper in the bottom of the cage to make it easy to clean.

- A. The bird will get sick if it does not have water.
B. A pet bird can sing sweetly.
C. You can get a pet bird at a pet store.
D. A pet rabbit may also live in a cage.

3. The trunks of elephants are strange, but useful. Elephants use their trunks to pick up things. Food is one thing that elephants pick up with their trunks. They also use their trunks to splash water over themselves.

- A. Elephants use their trunks to put food in their mouths.
B. Elephants have funny feet, too.
C. The ears of elephants have hair on them.
D. Pigs also look strange.

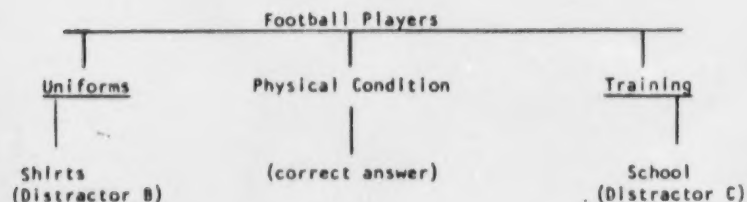
Item Description

The stimulus paragraph has an initial topic sentence that expresses the main idea. All other sentences pertain to the main idea stated in that topic sentence. At least two of these sentences should present supporting ideas and at least one sentence should state evidence for one of the supporting ideas. Longer paragraphs are desirable as examples of good writing, but would increase item difficulty. Main idea is most apparent in and pertinent to expository discourse. Therefore, the stimulus is written in expository discourse.

The student selects a sentence to add to a paragraph; the sentence fits the main idea. The correct answer should be either another supporting point or evidence for one of the supporting points in the stimulus. If the correct answer is evidence, it must pertain to any supporting points lacking supporting evidence in the stimulus unless all supporting points have such evidence.

Distractors are of two types:

(1) The distractor is a subordinate of a main idea that is coordinate to the main idea of the item stimulus, while the coordinates are subordinates of the same superordinate (all types B and C). The following diagram exemplifies this, utilizing content from item 1:



(2) The distractor is a subordinate of a different superordinate from that to which the topic sentence applies (all types D's).

This same item type can be revised slightly so that students select from four choices the only sentence that cannot be added to the paragraph because it does not pertain to the main idea. However, students could then answer the question correctly without reading the stimulus paragraph: They could simply choose the one distractor that pertained to content different from that of the other three choices. Therefore, this item type is not recommended for assessment.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR A DISCOURSE PRODUCTS SKILL

Skill: W5 DPpr 4000

Skill Statement

Writes an expository composition.

Skill Description

The student writes an expository composition of two or more paragraphs. The following are expository-writing skills of this task at this grade level:

- Skill W5 GDe 2313: Elaborates for expository writing: includes factual content: part/whole relationships.
- Skill W4 GDpo 5100: Uses logical order: procedural order.
- Skill W5 Lt 1300: Uses transitional expressions to link sentences: logical expressions.
- Skill W4 Ld 5000: Uses precise language (expository writing).

See these individual skills for their descriptions.

To complete this product, a student must employ a number of other content and form skills that are appropriate for this grade level. These skills are used by the student to implement characteristics on which the composition is evaluated in the scoring key.

The scoring guide explains the scoring-key criteria and gives guidelines for their rating. It also lists the specific numbers for the component skills under the scoring criterion for which each is relevant. The skills descriptions of these component content and form skills together give a comprehensive skill description for this product skill.

Assessment

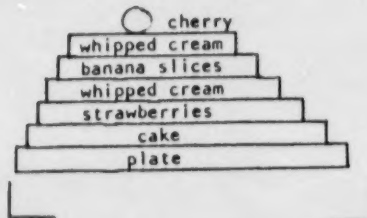
Sample Item

Directions: Read the contents and study the layers of the Fruit and Whipped Cream Treat.

Fruit and Whipped Cream TreatContents

- 1 yellow cake
- 1 cup of strawberries
- 1 cup of cut-up bananas
- 2 cups of whipped cream
- 1 cherry

Specifications for picture to be drawn:



Write at least one paragraph that explains to someone who has never fixed food how to put the Fruit and Whipped Cream Treat together.

- Start with the first thing you do.
- Tell about each part of the Treat that you put together.
- Tell about the parts in the order that you must put them together.
- Be sure to use exact words.
- Use words like next to join some of the sentences in your paragraphs.

Item Description

Using expository-writing skills, the student writes the composition requested by the stimulus. The stimulus must be a picture of a simple whole with its parts graphically displayed. The order in which the parts are connected should also be simply and graphically displayed. At this grade level, no working (i.e., moving) parts should be included in the part-whole stimulus object.

The series of instructions on including features helps ensure production of these features and facilitates the construction of an appropriate scoring key that evaluates these features.

Scoring Key

The skills array of the key's matrix consists of the features of good writing that are effected when students employ the content and form skills appropriate at this grade level for this writing task. The skills corresponding to each criterion are listed by framework number on the subsequent scoring guide. Performance ratings of good, average, or unacceptable are given on each criterion in accordance with the rating considerations that the scoring guide describes. Thus the scoring key can be used to elicit diagnostic information about individual component skills. It can also be used to determine a total writing score by assigning numerical equivalents to the good/average/unacceptable categories.

<u>Scoring Criteria</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Unacceptable</u>
CONTENT:			
Includes all parts of the Treat.	—	—	—
Writes about the parts in the order in which they are put together.	—	—	—
Uses precise language.	—	—	—
Uses logical transitions.	—	—	—
Uses sentences that pertain to the main idea.	—	—	—
FORM:			
Uses correct grammar.	—	—	—
Uses good sentence structure.	—	—	—
Capitalizes and punctuates correctly.	—	—	—
Spells correctly.	—	—	—
Writes legibly, with appropriate margins and indentation.	—	—	—

Scoring Guide

The scoring guide describes the guidelines for determining what constitutes a good, average, or unacceptable score on each criterion in the scoring key.

- The skills corresponding to each criterion are listed by framework number within the brackets that follow the criterion statement. The scoring guide references only those skills that (1) must be employed to produce the sample and (2) are designated as optimal assessment skills at the immediate and earlier grade levels. Scoring guidelines for one content characteristic and one form skill are exemplified below. Actual skill specifications include complete guidelines.

CONTENT EXAMPLE:

Includes all parts of the Treat (i.e., plate, cake, strawberries, whipped cream, banana slices, whipped cream, cherry).
[Skill GDe 2313]

Good: All parts are included.

Average: Most parts are included.

Unacceptable: Many parts are missing.

FORM EXAMPLE:

Spells correctly. [Skills Sc 1000, 2000, 3000; Sv 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000; Sa 1000, 2000; Ssp 2000, 3000, 4000]

Good: Most words are correctly spelled.

Average: Several different words are misspelled.

Unacceptable: Many different words are misspelled.

Comment: The average and unacceptable ratings for the "Spells correctly" criterion refer to "different words" because many instances of misspelling the same word should be evaluated as one misspelled word.